United Nations S/2002/1380

Security Council

Distr.: General
19 December 2002

Original: English

Letter dated 19 December 2002 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to your letter of 18 November 2002 addressed to me concerning your intention to extend the mandate of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) for 12 months, and your expectation that UNPOB can fulfil its mission within that period.

The Security Council takes note of your letter of 18 November 2002 and the importance of elections to the continuing peace process, and endorses a final extension of the mandate of the Office for 12 months to 31 December 2003.

The Council fully supports the important role UNPOB continues to play in implementing the Bougainville Peace Agreement. The Council is concerned, however, that delays in the implementation of the Agreement have led to the need for an extension of UNPOB's mission by a full year beyond the end-date envisioned a year ago. Specifically, the Council is seriously concerned that ongoing delays in the completion of stage two of the weapons disposal process, which must be certified by UNPOB, are preventing progress towards the formation of an autonomous Bougainville government and the coming into operation of the guarantee of a referendum among Bougainvilleans on Bougainville's political future.

The Council strongly urges all parties to the Agreement to fully abide by their obligations to the Agreement within the time frame of the UNPOB mandate, in particular to turn in all outstanding weapons and respect the integrity of the arms disposal process.

In order to better track and assess the progress of the UNPOB mission, the Council requests that the Secretariat produce a written report, within existing resources, on UNPOB progress prior to the Council's next quarterly briefing on Bougainville. The Council requests that the report include a clear exit strategy for the completion of UNPOB's mission and withdrawal, with a timetable and benchmarks that incorporate the holding of elections, as well as details on what specific steps UNPOB intends to take to meet each objective in its exit strategy on time.

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The Council requests that the Secretariat, through UNPOB, convey the present letter to the parties to the Agreement.

The Council calls upon the donor community to continue supporting the implementation of the Agreement, in particular the weapons disposal process.

(*Signed*) Alfonso **Valdivieso**
President of the Security Council